



AUSTRALIAN SENATE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2017-18
Thursday, 25 May 2017
Daily summary

Here is the summary of today's proceedings in the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's Budget Estimates.

The committee met from 9.00 am until 5.25 pm.

The committee called:

- the department and agencies of the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio, commencing with Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). The other agencies called were Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resources economics and Sciences (ABARES), Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), and Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA). The departmental areas called to give evidence were Corporate matters and Outcome 1, Sustaining natural resources for longer term productivity primary.

Some areas of interest that the committee covered included:

- progress on and consequences of APVMA relocation to Armidale;
- department's use of labour hire contractors and the conditions of these contracted employees;
- employment and recruitment of indigenous staff within the department and their geographic distribution;
- number of farmers eligible for the concessional loan scheme and household allowance;
- increased market access for various produce into the Chinese market in 2016, including for dairy, live rock lobsters, cherries, citrus, and wine;
- update on free trade agreements that are ongoing or that the government is pursuing, including those with Indonesia, India, the EU, the Gulf countries, the UK, and Peru;
- progress made for a number of vegetable types into the Chinese market;
- \$15 million provided for the national carp control program, divided between Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, and Department of Industry, Innovation and Science;
- differences between DNA and RNA viruses, and whether the DNA-based herpes virus used to kill the common carp will likely mutate when released into various waterways; and
- number of illegal fishing activities detected in Australian waters in the last financial year.